

2021 SAMHSA SOAR MARCH E-NEWS

Celebrating National Social Work Month

SOAR Case Workers Are Essential

We are immensely grateful for the incredible work that SOAR case workers and SOAR leaders are doing to serve those who are most vulnerable in our communities. The SOAR initiative is special and unique in so many ways. It requires people to step out of their comfort zones, learn complex regulations, and navigate complicated bureaucracies. You all do it with grace and fortitude.

Our country and these lands on which we live have seen difficult times over the centuries, and this time in which we are living is one that will remain in our hearts and history books as one of the most challenging. We have all struggled personally and professionally in so many ways. We are so proud of how SOAR providers have shown both resilience and innovation. Although the challenges of enduring a global pandemic are real, you all have found, and continue to find, ways of continuing SOAR work with compassion for the people we serve and commitment to the fidelity of the SAMHSA SOAR model. You've figured out new ways to communicate and stay safe, all while continuing to help people access life-saving benefits. Every form, every Medical Summary Report, every phone call to the Social Security Administration (SSA) is taking a step to transform someone's life. Your SOAR work matters.

Thank you for your essential work.

—Kristin Lupfer, Dazara Ware, and Abigail Kirkman, SAMHSA SOAR TA Center

March Is National Social Work Month!

March is Social Work Month, a time to celebrate the contributions of social workers. This year's theme is "[Social Workers are Essential](#)." Those words couldn't be more true during these times of COVID-19! We know that social workers often put others before themselves. During the COVID-19 pandemic, social workers have tirelessly risen to meet the ever-growing demands for their services. According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics, "social workers should provide appropriate professional services in public emergencies to the greatest extent possible." That is exactly what social workers are doing!

Vaccine distribution is being managed in phases and groups on a state level. Many states have included social workers and social work interns in their COVID-19 phase 1A vaccine rollout because they are considered essential healthcare workers.

We urge social workers and social work interns to check with their individual healthcare providers, state health departments, and NASW State Chapter to find out if they are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

Stay well! Stay healthy, social workers!

Resources for Social Workers



Pam Heine, SAMHSA SOAR TA Center Senior Project Associate and proud New Jersey-licensed social worker, receiving her first vaccination. In early March, Pam will be able to assist as a non-medical volunteer at her county vaccine clinic site because she'll be fully vaccinated!

- [SOAR COVID-19 Resource Page](#)
- [NASW COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [NASW State Chapter Finder](#)
- [State Health Department Finder](#)

February 2021 Virtual Leadership Academy Recap

From February 9-11, the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center facilitated a virtual SOAR Leadership Academy. Abigail Kirkman, Dazara Ware, Pamela Heine, Amanda Starkey, Daniel Coladonato, Sametra Polkah-Toe, Suzy Sodergren, and Kristin Lupfer of the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center facilitated the training. Twenty-one participants representing 11 states (CA, FL, IL, IN, MD, ME, MI, NM, NY, TX, and WA) attended the Leadership Academy. Participants learned from experts, shared ideas with each other, and networked—all virtually. Now they are ready to lead and expand SOAR in their states and communities!



Equity in Native American Communities

Native people have experienced profound historical and intergenerational trauma. These hardships, compounded by inadequate interventions, have led to significant social inequalities and health disparities in urban, suburban, rural, and reservation-based communities. To strive for equity, providers must understand the impact of trauma and the importance of culture for healing and wellness in Native communities. A primary step is employing culturally responsive interventions designed to improve the cultural, physical, and emotional well-being of Native children, adults, and families.

The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center is developing materials that build equity and strengthen cultural competency among SOAR providers, community organizations, and non-Native partners serving Native communities. In addition to the [SOAR for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities infographic](#), the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center will publish a series of adapted tools and worksheets to support providers serving Native individuals and communities throughout the Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) application process. These Native-specific materials include culturally responsive resources and guiding questions in the SOAR Medical Summary Report Interview Guide and Template, Sample SOAR Referral Application, Implementing State and Local SOAR Initiatives Guide, and Identifying SOAR Applicants Worksheet.

Please join us for our ongoing SOAR Orientation for Native Communities webinar series to review these new materials and discuss how the SOAR approach can help providers in Native communities and organizations submit complete and high-quality SSI/SSDI applications.

- [April 14, 2021, 3:00-4:00 p.m. ET](#)
- [July 14, 2021, 3:00-4:00 p.m. ET](#)

SOAR Job Opportunities

Illinois

AgeOptions is seeking a full-time SOAR partner based in Greater Chicago/Oak Park, Illinois. The successful candidate will work directly with members and assist them with the SSI/SSDI application process, conduct necessary data analysis, and provide statistical reporting as it relates to the transition program.

Learn more about this job on the [SOARWorks website](#). Do you have a job posting you would like to share with the SOAR community? Please submit it to the [SAMHSA SOAR TA Center](#)!

Sharing Our Successes

Maryland's SOAR Initiative Shares Comments From Successful SOAR Applicants

When thinking about the success of SOAR, there is a tendency to focus on numbers, such as approval rates, or processing times, but those of us who do the work know that behind each of those numbers is a person whose life has been significantly impacted when approved for SSI/SSDI.

Maryland's SOAR initiative seeks to follow up with SOAR applicants 6 months after their claim has been approved to hear their stories. Below are just a few of the comments received. When feeling overwhelmed by the process, or frustrated by things not going to plan, it can help to remember that the work we do is truly life-changing.



"I was very afraid that I was going to age out of foster care and be homeless. I have watched that happen to other foster youth. I have been able to find a nice place to live, volunteer daily helping others, and find some happiness. I still maintain regular contact with my SOAR support person, and I have helped talk to other foster youth about SOAR. I am having a good life now."

"I feel better that I can purchase things that I could not before. I would miss birthdays and things because I did not feel I could fully participate. I celebrated my mom's birthday and was able to pay the tab."

"SSI gave me stability. I don't have to rely on family and worry about being put out. I was able to get my own housing. My life is less stressful now. Before I had too much stress, and I wasn't mentally healthy. Now I can do just about anything I want. I can cook whenever I want. I can put my food in one spot and eat it all month."



"Since I have gotten disability, I can do adult things now. I can pay my own bills. I can apply for a credit card. I can look for apartments. I am really excited to have my own place. Working with SOAR was great. I didn't think it would be that easy."

"It helped me to sit with [my SOAR provider] and write my story for SOAR. I can see that lots of bad things happened to me that are not my fault, and that I am a survivor. I have a plan for my life now, and I am as close to happy as I have ever been. I know without SOAR I would be on the street, and I don't think I could have survived it."

[Submit Your SOAR Success](#)

"Sharing Our Successes stories are edited for brevity and clarity. All client names have been changed to protect anonymity."

Events

[SOARing Over Lunch Conference Calls](#)

March 16, 2021, 1:00-2:00 p.m. ET

The next SOARing Over Lunch Conference Call will take place on March 16, 2021, at 1:00 p.m. ET! The SAMHSA SOAR TA Center hosts this series of informal monthly calls designed to help support SOAR efforts across the country. Participants can join to ask about any SOAR-related question they may have.

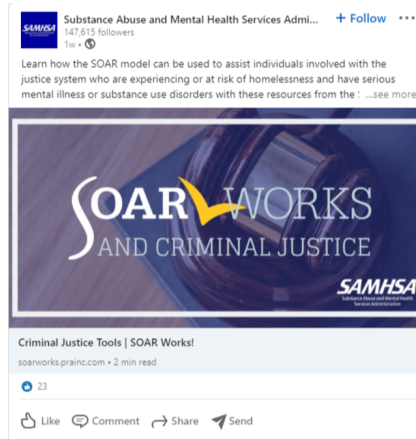
[Add SOARing Over Lunch to Your Calendar](#)

[Webinar Materials Now Available: SSI for Children: Engaging Families for Successful SOAR Applications](#)

In this webinar, held on February 3, 2021, the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center discussed engagement and collaboration strategies for submitting complete SSI applications for children. Attendees heard from seasoned SOAR providers who are having great success building relationships with families and professionals from child-serving systems in their communities. The materials from this webinar, including the slide presentation and webinar recording, are now available for on-demand access.

Get Social with the SAMHSA SOAR TA Center

Hear more about what SAMHSA SOAR is up to via [@samhsagov](#) on Twitter, [@samhsa](#) on Facebook, and [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) on LinkedIn!



Federal Resource

[Preparing Staff for the COVID-19 Vaccine: Communication and Confidence Checklist](#)

In a recent [mailing from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Exchange](#), several resources were provided to promote COVID-19 vaccine confidence. The Preparing Staff for the COVID-19 Vaccine: *Communication and Confidence Checklist* is a step-by-step resource that can help service providers build confidence in their staff to receive the COVID-19 vaccine so they can continue their vital work.

Partner Resource

[Consumer Perspectives of the COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

This issue brief from the National Health Care for the Homeless Council explores perspectives of individuals who have concerns over the vaccine and provides strategies healthcare providers and homeless service providers can employ to build vaccine confidence.



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Technical Assistance (TA) Center is sponsored by SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

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